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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000742

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BE](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY DAN FRIED DISCUSSES GUANTANAMO
DETAINEES WITH BELGIAN OFFICIALS

REF: A. BRUSSELS 679

[1](#)B. BRUSSELS 693

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Wayne Bush, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure (S/GC) Daniel Fried met with a group of Belgian officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Interior and Immigration on May 19. The group was chaired by Axel Delvoie, Deputy Director for Multilateral Affairs of the MFA. Fried informed the Belgians about the ongoing Guantanamo detainee review process and urged the Belgian government to indicate the parameters (e.g., nationality, language) for detainees it would be willing to consider for resettlement in Belgium. Fried also addressed recent press articles on the U.S. decision to modify the military commissions formed under the previous administration, noting changes that provide greater legal protections for defendants, and emphasizing the importance of retaining prosecutorial options. Delvoie informed that the GOB is conducting an internal discussion on the detainee resettlement issue. He expressed concern that the USG is itself reluctant to release detainees into the United States, and that resettled detainees may pose a security threat to Belgium. However, he promised to respond to Fried's request for clarity on which detainees the GOB would be willing to consider. In a later conversation with Walter Stevens, chief of staff to the Foreign Minister, Fried suggested that it might be a good idea for the GOB to consider the Uighur detainees, who are generally considered lower threat. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Fried stressed that the United States government is working under a deadline imposed by President Obama to close the Guantanamo detention facility by January 22, 2010. There are currently 240 detainees whose case histories are under review. The USG is evaluating which of the detainees it can prosecute successfully and which can be cleared for resettlement or repatriation. Fried emphasized that this review also considers the danger detainees might pose to the international community, and that the USG would not approve an individual for transfer and release in cases where a serious danger existed.

[1](#)3. (C) Fried touched on the nationalities of some detainees approved for transfer and release, highlighting the Uighurs as a group that has been approved and who are likely some of the lowest threat individuals still at Guantanamo. Fried also mentioned Tunisians, Algerians, Syrians and Uzbeks as groups the USG is considering for resettlement. Noting other European efforts, Fried informed about his discussions just that morning with officials from the European Commission and Council, and the expected conclusion of a European Union political umbrella for detainee resettlements by mid-June.

[1](#)4. (C) Addressing information sharing, Fried offered that the USG has and will provide European partners with "substantially the same" information as USG decision-makers use when determining whether to approve a detainee for

transfer and release. These information packets includes the detainee,s biographic information, history, and factors that are relevant to the individual,s security risk. Along with this information, the USG is prepared to make facilitate interviews with detainees for governments considering resettlement.

15. (C) Delvoie began by noting Belgium,s enthusiasm for closing Guantanamo. The GOB is currently undertaking an internal dialogue about resettling detainees, and has a lot of questions. For example, he raised the GOB perception that Guantanamo is a U.S. responsibility and likewise was interested in knowing which of the detainees will be released in the United States. He expressed the GOB,s concern over the USG's decision to continue with military commissions. Additionally, he raised GOB worry over the security threats posed by the detainees. Fried replied that the detainees are not all the "worst of the worst" as they have been portrayed in the past. Some indeed are hardened terrorists and some are bad actors, like drug dealers, who made bad choices at a young age and volunteered to fight. Most are basically foot soldiers, not radicals. Fried emphasized that the USG recognizes its responsibility. At the same time, the debate in the United States over the detainees' fate is a difficult one, and European help is important to the USG in that dialogue. As for the military commissions, Fried highlighted that the President has ordered reforms to address problems and will be seeking authority for more reforms from the Congress. However, the commissions are an important prosecutorial tool to provide the USG options for addressing complex cases.

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16. (C) Delvoie asked how the list of detainees offered to the Belgians would be prepared. Fried explained that the USG would first like to know the type of persons Belgium would be willing to seriously consider for resettlement. After that, the USG would provide appropriate files for review by the GOB. Those files will paint a good picture of each detainee,s nature based in the factual history of the detainee,s background and acts. Highlighting the Uighurs specifically, Fried noted that from those files one could understand that the Uighurs are not a threat and should be resettled. Delvoie replied that the decision on taking detainees has not yet been taken by the GOB, but his government wants to work with the USG. Delvoie promised to get back to Special Envoy Fried and the Embassy with some parameters and other information to begin consideration of specific detainees for resettlement in Belgium.

17. (C) In a brief, separate meeting with Walter Stevens, the chief of staff for Foreign Minister De Gucht, Fried gave a synopsisized recitation of the points he made with the large group. He told Stevens that the USG's internal review of Guantanamo detainees will be finished by mid-summer, but there is already a group that has been approved for transfer and release that the GOB could consider. Fried focused again on the Uighur detainees as low threat individuals that would make it easy for the GOB to handle from a security perspective. Fried recognized the diplomatic problems with China relating to the Uighurs, but observed that if many EU members combine to take these detainees, it will be difficult for China to take effective action in retaliation. Fried noted that the GOB could review information on the Uighurs immediately and that it might be wise to move quickly to take them given their low security risk.

18. (C) Stevens inquired about progress with the EU on a the U.S.-EU joint statement on cooperation in closing Guantanamo, and about the status of the military commissions. Fried said that specific language is under discussion with the EU and that we should be close to a text after member states review what the EU Council and Commission present. The aim is to complete work in conjunction with the EU internal

position by mid-June. Fried reiterated his comments to the larger group in regard to military commissions.

19. (U) S/GC has cleared this telegram.

BUSH

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